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M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: June 22, 2018

TO: Councilor Schwartz, Chairman
Members of the Land Use Committee

FROM: Barney Heath, Director of Planning and Development
James Freas, Deputy Director of Planning and Development
Jennifer Caira, Chief Planner of Current Planning

RE: Employment of Outside Consultants for Large Projects

MEETING DATE: June 26, 2018

CC: Ouida Young, Acting City Solicitor
Planning and Development Board

Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 44, §53G and Article X, Section 7 of the City of Newton City Council Rules and Orders 2018 – 2019, the City Council, acting through its designee, the Land Use Committee, may hire outside consultants whenever the Land Use Committee determines that the City lacks sufficient staff resources or expertise to provide timely reports or reviews of pending land use petitions. The Land Use Committee may confer with the Director of Planning and Development and any other City departments, commissions, or agencies in determining the need to hire an outside consultant. The applicant filing the land use petition is responsible for paying the consultant's fee to the City and the fee is to be set by the Director of Planning and Development. The Director of Planning and Development selects the consultant, in accordance with all applicable ordinances and state statutes and the applicant may appeal the selection by requesting the City Council to reconsider if they feel the consultant has a conflict of interest or does not possess the necessary educational or professional qualifications.

Typically, consultants have been hired to do peer reviews of studies submitted by the applicants, such as traffic studies, parking studies, drainage studies, and fiscal analyses. The consultants were historically hired through individual RFP processes overseen by the Director of Planning. Within the next six months, several large developments are expected to file land use petitions, such as Riverside and Northland. Given the scope and complexity of these projects, outside consultant reviews will be necessary. The Planning Department is proposing to assemble a list of on-call consultants from various disciplines through an RFP process in advance of Special Permit filings, in lieu of hiring consultants ad hoc throughout the process.

Through this approach the Planning Department will utilize an RFP process to assemble on-call consultants with specialized expertise in various areas including, but not limited to, design, transportation (including traffic, parking, circulation, and transportation demand management), economic analysis (include market studies, financial analysis, and fiscal impact studies), and engineering and environmental protection (including stormwater systems and conservation). The Planning Department plans to assemble a team of consultants at the outset of a project and call upon those consultants as necessary throughout the process. The consultants will be tasked with providing original studies, such as a market analysis, as well as providing peer reviews of reports submitted by the consultant. The Planning Department also envisions incorporating the consultant teams into community engagement as necessary. Once a team is assembled, the Planning Department will put together an initial scope of work tailored to each project and request quotes from consultants. Additional work and/or consultants may be necessary throughout the process; however, every effort will be made to identify the full scope of services needed early on.

The proposed strategy to have consultants on-call for the various types of reviews that will be needed, as well as starting the review process prior to submission of the Special Permit applications, will increase the efficiency of the land use review process by not having to stop to conduct an RFP process as the need for review arises and by having as much information and independent analysis as possible available at the beginning of the City Council review process.

Next steps: with the Committee's recommendation, the Planning Department will continue to assemble the on-call consultants and start the review process as information becomes available from applicants.